



Across the bar

LOCAL SPIRIT AND WHISKEY TRENDS

FROM BUCK MULLIGAN'S WHISKEY BAR , NORTHCOTE, AUSTRALIA

- ▶ We are a small whiskey bar located in Northcote - 5kms north of the Melbourne CBD.
- ▶ Our focus is on Irish Whiskey and Irish literature.
- ▶ We have around 160 different whiskeys, at least 50% are Irish.



Sales breakdown

- ▶ For the last financial year:
- ▶ 50% spirits, with beer, wine and food making up the other 50%
- ▶ Total whiskey sales: 14.3%:
 - ▶ Irish whiskey 6.5%
 - ▶ Scotch whiskey 4%
 - ▶ Japanese Whiskey 2%
 - ▶ Australian Whiskey 1%
 - ▶ American/Canadian 0.8%

Cocktails

- ▶ 25% of all sales
- ▶ At least 50% of these are whiskey-based, such as: Whiskey Sour, Old Fashioned, Manhattan, and a few house cocktails.
- ▶ We mainly use Irish Whiskey, mostly: Jameson, Jameson Black Barrel, Teeling Single Grain, Redbreast 12yr old, Connemara, and Hyde 1916.
- ▶ Our top 20 sellers for the year included 6 cocktails, with our Whiskey Sour being our third best seller, after Guinness and lager (on tap).



The COVID effect

- ▶ We have always enjoyed a healthy percentage of spirit sales, but this increased since the start of COVID, especially during the lockdown periods; and primarily through cocktail and whiskey sales.
- ▶ ...Cointreau had their biggest ever sales in Australia during lockdown because people were making cocktails at home. Due to this, it was hard to source when we reopened.



Trends across our bar - Whiskey

- ▶ The majority of our customers are still not familiar with Irish Whiskey, apart from Jameson.
- ▶ They are willing to try though, especially if the price point is reasonable.
- ▶ They still love a single malt.
- ▶ They still love an age statement.
- ▶ They still love a region from Scotland. ie: "I only drink Speyside whisky."
- ▶ Japanese whiskey is very popular, especially with female customers.
- ▶ There is growing interest in whiskey generally, amongst female customers.
- ▶ Mainland Australian whiskey is growing in popularity. And new distillers are producing whiskey with good price points. Tassie whiskies seems more expensive in comparison.
- ▶ Shopping locally is very important at the moment, so customers are more likely to ask for and buy a Victorian whiskey.

Trends across our bar - Gin

- ▶ Gin is still very popular, with local gins selling well.
- ▶ We have 16 different gins in the bar and only 3 vodkas, 3 rums, etc.
- ▶ Gin based cocktails are very popular.



Spirits in general

- ▶ We sell more premium spirits than house spirits. We are not really a mixed drink kind of bar, although we do sell a lot of G and T's.

Wines

- ▶ White wine sales have slipped due to the increase in spirit sales.
- ▶ Growing interest in Pét-Nat, Skin Contact and Organic wines.

Non-alcohol drinks

- ▶ We now stock non-alcoholic beers and spirits
- ▶ We have 2 non-alcoholic cocktails on the menu, which both sell well.

Broad trends across Melbourne

- ▶ Australia's first non-alcoholic bar just opened - "Brunswick Aces". Most bars now stock non-alcoholic beers, wines and spirits
- ▶ Growing interest in whiskey amongst female drinkers. Our whiskey masterclass attendance is around 50% female.
- ▶ Classic cocktails are still the most popular although the 80's classics are starting to make a come back, like Japanese Slipper and Pina Colada.
- ▶ Greater ranges of canned drinks are popular, including wines and cocktails in a can.
- ▶ Shopping locally is a trend, with customers opting for locally made products.
- ▶ Craft Seltzer is very popular.
- ▶ Cocktails on tap are big.
- ▶ Limited set menus, for both food and drink, have emerged due to uncertainty around lockdowns – with offerings being reduced and tailored – this is likely to continue post-COVID.
- ▶ Australian whiskey is going through a resurgence, but with focus now on the mainland.

Opportunities for Irish whiskey

- ▶ Needs people on the ground to promote the products, with knowledge about the history of Irish Whiskey - customers love the stories.
- ▶ Need to highlight that the Irish invented whiskey.
- ▶ More choice... the current choice of whiskies available here is still limited.
- ▶ Price points need to be competitive.
- ▶ Target female drinkers – the taste profile is similar to Japanese whiskey.
- ▶ Use in cocktails - I am sure that most bars are not using Irish whiskey.
- ▶ Target whiskey clubs to attract the special-interest market.
- ▶ Too much emphasis is being placed on the finish of the whiskey and not on the distillate itself. There's opportunity to create new whiskies using other grains and old recipes.
- ▶ Independent bottling versus rebranded whiskey.

Questions:

